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Once-per-month XEPLION[®] is well placed to help patients achieve long-term treatment continuation together with the associated life benefits. ^{1, 2}

References:

1. Taipale H, Mittendorfer-Rutz E, Alexanderson K, et al. Antipsychotics and mortality in nationwide cohort of 29 823 patients with schizophrenia. *Schizophrenia Research* 2017. Available from: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.schres.2017.12.010>. 2. Decuyper F, Serman J, Geerts P, et al. Treatment continuation of four long-acting antipsychotics medications in the Netherlands and Belgium: A retrospective database study. *PLoS ONE* 2017;12(6):e0179049. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0179049>.

[S] XEPLION[®] 50, 75, 100 or 150mg Prolonged release suspension for intramuscular injection. Each pre-filled syringe contains sterile paliperidone palmitate equivalent to 50, 75, 100 or 150mg of paliperidone respectively. Reg. Nos.: 44/2.6.5/0866; 44/2.6.5/0867; 44/2.6.5/0868; 44/2.6.5/0870. JANSSEN PHARMACEUTICA (PTY) LTD, (Reg. No. 1980/011122/07), Building 6, Country Club Estate, 21 Woodlands Drive, Woodmead, 2191. www.janssen.co.za. Medical Info Line: 0860 11 11 17.

For full prescribing information refer to the latest package insert (August 2018).



PHZA/XEP/0818/0004.



Dehumanising people based on their medical diagnosis is a discriminatory practice and in violation of our Constitution: *Everyone is equal before the law... has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, includingdisability....*

Advocacy means speaking, pleading or interceding for someone else, or public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. It implies a vigour, and commitment to a cause that may sometimes include high cost and even risk.

The central tenet of advocacy in healthcare is that service users should be enabled to speak up on their own behalf and empowered to take a lead in the decision-making process (self advocacy); due sensitivity must be exercised to ensure that this is not at the expense of their mental wellness.

Advocacy improves the individual's understanding of their situation, enables their views to be heard, ensures that they have the opportunity to be partners in their care and increases their autonomy. It promotes the rights of those who suffer discrimination because of their age, (mental!) disability, sexuality, gender or culture; advocacy also ensures the availability of quality care systems.

Advocates aim to improve care, to protect safety or rights, to demand further resources or to influence policy at a local or national level. A wide range of actions and activities conducted by a variety of people aimed at changing major structural and attitudinal barriers constitute acts of advocacy. Advocacy seeks to 'give a voice to the voiceless', and is not to be confused with speaking for a person who was not consulted or being a self-appointed proxy for a person who is too ill so as to promote one's own agenda. Medical paternalism must be guarded against from practitioners who form 'defensive bastions' against patient power. Advocacy should be underpinned by the

principles of empowerment, independence, inclusivity (socio-economic status, race, gender, age, language and culture), impartiality, and confidentiality; it should be a free service.

A mental health advocate may be one of a range of individuals or organisations: the patient themselves (the self-advocate), a friend or family member, someone with specific training in advocacy or a lawyer. The 'citizen advocate' is a volunteer who takes on the role as part of their sense of responsibility as a member of society, who would befriend their protégé over months or years. This concept is different from 'peer advocate', who has used similar services and can employ this experience to support another patient.

Advocacy is one of the core competencies of all health care practitioners included in the CANMEDS framework mandated by the HPCSA. Legal and ethical imperatives govern health care professionals' responsibilities to uphold the highest standards of humane and ethical clinical practices that transcend the employer-employee relationship.

NGOs and professional associations can advocate to improve the mental health care, mental health policy and mental health legislation in the country. They can improve the training of mental healthcare professionals, provide information, training, and funding to advance the interests of mental wellness and patients' rights and serve as arbiters of conflict between patients and service providers. The South African Federation for Mental Health launched their Advocacy Movement, SAMHAM, in 2007. Their intensive 4 year strategy to establish advocacy groups in all 9 provinces ends in 2019 and is currently being evaluated. SADAG, established just over two decades ago, has a sterling track record in promoting literacy around mental health/illness; together with Section 27 and the South African Society of Psychiatrists, they were instrumental in exposing the Life Esidimeni tragedy. Mental Health Review Boards

under the Mental health Care Act 17 of 2002 offered a window of opportunity for strategic advocacy. Triangulated by the MECs for Health, patients and their families and the High Court, the Review Boards are ideally placed to champion the cause of mental health care.

Knowledge is power! Myths and misconceptions about mental health and mental illness require education to improve mental health literacy.

'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for life'; the core aim of advocacy is to enable individuals to speak for themselves (Newbiggin 2007). Arguably, 100% of the population has mental *health* issues. Those with mental *illness* constitute ±20% and those with severe mental illness constitute 4% of the population (NAMI). Mental *illness* awareness must be distinguished from mental *health* awareness -both require advocacy! To enable a vulnerable and muted population to find their voice requires both passion and compassion combined with a missionary zeal for selfless service by those in positions of ability and opportunity. For all those who are in touch with reality, it is time to stand up and speak up for those who can't..... human rights violations through discriminatory practices occur through omission or commission.....silence is complicity! **MHM**

THUMA MINA

I wanna be there when the people
start to turn it around
When they triumph over poverty
I wanna be there when the people
win the battle against AIDS
I wanna lend a hand
I wanna be there for the alcoholic
I wanna be there for the drug addict
I wanna be there for the victims of
violence and abuse
I wanna be there for the mentally ill
I wanna lend a hand
Send me

References available upon request